

BEFORE THE
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF SECRETARY

In the Matter of)
)
Review of the Commission's Regulations)
Governing Television Broadcasting) MM Docket No. 91-221
)
Television Satellite Stations)
Review of Policy and Rules) MM Docket No. 87-7

TO: The Commission

REPLY COMMENTS OF LIN TELEVISION CORPORATION

In its initial comments, LIN described the significant benefits accruing in each of its markets from the five LMAs it is currently party to. Only one of its competitors in any of those markets, Centennial Communications, licensee of WGNT, in Portsmouth-Norfolk, Virginia, filed in opposition to LMAs and/or duopoly relaxation.

Centennial complains first that because of LIN's LMA with previously independent station WVBT "program diversity has been significantly reduced" because "a great deal of the programming" on the two stations is "duplicated". Comments at 5. This is simply false. The two stations currently have only seven hours per week of the same programming (which runs at different times) or four percent of WVBT's schedule. While this is a greater degree of duplication than before the LMA, when WVBT carried only home shopping programming, it is clearly not substantial.

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Centennial also complains that because LIN now has greater "shelf space" for local sports and syndicated product, there is greater competition for that product with WGNT. Again, it appears that Centennial was better off when WVBT had a signal so weak it could not effectively compete in the market and was condemned to a home shopping format. But the fact is that the viewers in Norfolk are better off because they have substantially more programming choices. And they will benefit again as LIN implements the local news commitment it had to make to secure the Fox affiliation for WVBT.^{1/}

The Commission's objective, as it has stated on numerous occasions, is to protect competition, not individual competitors.^{2/} WGNT undoubtedly preferred the clubbier competitive atmosphere before WVBT became a full-service station. But there is no evidence that WGNT has been harmed in any serious way and there is considerable evidence that both competition and diversity have benefitted.

^{1/} Centennial could have competed for that affiliation by making a similar commitment. Ironically, pro-diversity Centennial has chosen not to provide such service, obtaining its only news program from Norfolk's CBS affiliate, WTKR.

^{2/} See FCC v. Sanders Brothers Radio Station, 309 U.S. 470, 475 (1940) ("[p]lainly it is not the purpose of the Act to protect a licensee against competition but to protect the public"). See also KFBB Corporation, 6 FCC Rcd 4637, 4640 (1991) (citations omitted) (stating "[I]t is not the purpose of the [Communications] Act to protect licensees from competition").

LIN is not unsympathetic to the possibility that WGNT, as a stand-alone station, may not be at optimal or even viable firm size over the long run. Only a few years ago, LIN was one of the largest group broadcasters in the country when measured by national audience reach. In Dallas, the eighth largest market in the country, LIN was essentially the largest television company licensed to that market. It is now the fifth largest and in all likelihood will soon be the sixth largest, competing against companies with national coverages anywhere from two to six times as great. All of these companies have a great deal more clout in the national market for syndicated programming and rapidly growing clout in the national advertising market as well.

The answer to this competitive shift is not to try to turn back the clock or to administratively order the tide to recede. The national consolidation in the broadcast industry has been essential to obtain the kinds of efficiencies necessary to compete effectively with our burgeoning multichannel competitors. Additional flexibility and agility is also essential at the local level. The LMA mechanism, while it has undoubtedly changed the competitive landscape for stations such as WGNT, has without any question been pro-competitive and pro-diversity and has made an invaluable contribution to the health of the broadcast industry. The Commission should acknowledge this fact by truly grandfathering existing LMAs and allowing them to be

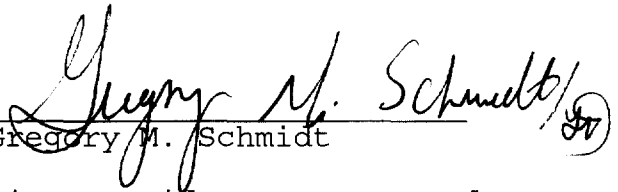
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converted to full ownership arrangements and by permitting comparable new arrangements in the future.

Respectfully submitted,

LIN TELEVISION CORPORATION

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